Hail to the Granite Industry

The following article is from *Impact* (Volume No. VI, Issue No. V, December, 1986), a newsletter published by Ervin Industries. *Impact* provided a wealth of information on steel shot and grit, its history, and its uses.

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Did you ever see how granite and marble building blocks were cut to size years ago? They were SAWED! Sawed with gigantic gangsaws (with mild-steel blades—up to 20 feet long, about 12 inches high, by 3/4-inch thick). The abrasive media used between the saw blade and the granite was—SAND! So, how did chilled iron shot get into the act?

The story goes like this: Once upon a time an enterprising granite quarrier was fighting a losing battle trying to finish his block-sawing prior to his contract completion deadline. If he beat the deadline—a bonus. If he was late—a hefty penalty clause would be invoked. He was worried!

He was imaginative, too. In desperation and in an effort to speed up the sawing, he mixed in some iron filings with his sand. BINGO! Faster sawing resulted, and he wound up with a fat bonus on his contract, not the penalty he had feared.

Did he “live happily ever after?” Maybe, but not just then. Now, he found he couldn’t scrape up enough iron filings in the area to satisfy his needs for future jobs. Not one to give up, he decided he would just make his own substitute for the iron filings. And, the shot business was born! Yep, he made chilled cast iron shot!

WHEN? It had to be prior to 1895, as we know from the reference to shot and iron sand in the article published that year.
WHERE? Apparently, the first shot made in the U.S. was cast in New Hampshire, in the heart of the northeast granite quarrying area. In addition to granite-sawing with shot, the quarries used shot for polishing the slabs, and to “shape-carve” incredibly delicate floral patterns, etc. for tombstones.